

Weather Review: Louisiana, 2008

Louisiana's weather highlights for 2008 featured Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, snow, drought, heavy rainfall, and tornadoes. Statewide, annual temperature averaged 66.7° F. which was slightly below normal. Louisiana again experienced a drier-than-normal year with the annual rainfall totaling 56.03 inches, 4.06 inches below normal.

January: The first week of January brought unseasonable temperatures- even reaching into the low 80's F. Two tornadoes touched down in northern Louisiana on the 10th. Wintry weather ventured into Louisiana on the 14th, and snow was even recorded in northern parishes on the 19th. The latter portion of the month ended with dreary overcast conditions.

February: The first week of February was relatively warm and uneventful. However, several cold fronts that crossed the state this month produced severe weather. On the 12th, multiple tornadoes were produced in southern parishes, and hail and wind damage was documented statewide. There were more tornadoes recorded on the 16th and 17th, with one in Point Coupee having a track eight miles in length. There was also wind damage in northern parishes. Tornadoes were also confirmed on the 21st and there were additional damaging winds across the state on the 25th.

March: The cycle of fronts and severe weather continued for the first two weeks of March, bringing additional bouts of severe weather. A cold front on the 3rd was particularly prolific in producing rainfall, with one to two inches reported nearly statewide. The latter half of the month was mostly dry, though another heavy rainfall event on the 30th capped off the mostly arid month.

April: The first half of the month brought more fronts and severe weather, including hail and damaging winds. Two tornadoes were reported on the 4th in Winn Parish, with one having a track of seven miles in length. There was more severe weather on 11th, including three additional tornadoes. The middle of the month brought relatively cool conditions statewide. Nearer the end of the month, heavy rains pelted southeastern parishes, including daily rain totals over five inches in Algiers and eight inches in Terrytown on the 26th.

May: Severe weather struck the state on the 2nd, with three tornadoes, but otherwise the first half of the month was relatively quiet, though dry. On the 14th, a cold front induced two EF1 tornadoes that caused two injuries in Beauregard Parish and one injury in St. Martin. The very next day, two more EF1 tornadoes were spawned, one in St. Tammany that had a path six miles in length, and the other in Washington Parish. In this weather event, there was also thunderstorm wind damage that caused one fatality in Iberville from a falling tree. There were numerous locations with heavy rain, with several sites exceeding nine inches of rain. A second heavy rainfall event hit the southern half of the state with rain totals between three and five inches. The month ended with summer-like conditions – hot and humid.

June: The summer kicked off with sweltering temperatures over the first week. On June 10th, a front ventured into northern parishes triggering more heavy rainfall (over five inches). Flash flooding was also a problem in Jefferson Parish on the 15th, when nearly six inches of rain fell in only a few hours. High pressure brought in less humid conditions on the 18th and 19th, and June closed out with a steady diet of typical scattered thunderstorms.

July: Scattered thunderstorms were common in the first week of the month. During the second week, however, a ridge of high pressure formed over LA in the upper atmosphere that prevented rain, thereby allowing some triple digit temperatures. Drought then set in over the latter half of the month, especially in central and northern LA, though some tropical rains arrived along the coast from Hurricane Dolly, which passed close enough to the state to bring some feeder-band rain, as well as rains from a tropical wave on the 29th.

August: Tropical Storm Edouard made landfall near the LA-TX border on the 5th, arriving with little fanfare. The middle third of the month was influenced by a pesky front that oscillated over the state bringing widespread rains and drought relief. The month ended with Tropical Storm Faye bringing more rain to the Florida Parishes.

September: Hurricane Gustav slammed into south-central LA on the 1st. Gustav's impact was felt throughout the entire state, with surge in coastal parishes in the southeast, high winds in south-central and southwestern parishes, and heavy "drought-busting" rains in the northern half of the state. This single event was the biggest weather story of the year in LA. Hurricane Ike then passed south of LA on its way to a landfall near Galveston, TX, but it brought impressive storm surge to the entire LA coastline – 15 feet of surge near the LA-TX border. Typical fall weather then occurred over the remainder of the month.

October: The state's driest month, on average, lived up to its billing. The state only averaged 1.51 inches of rain for the entire month. Although drought was not yet declared, most Louisianans were coping with the arid conditions.

November: The first week of November continued the arid pattern of October, but the second week broke out with some frontally-induced rains. The third and fourth weeks of month repeated the pattern of weeks one and two, with a dry week three and rainy week four.

December: December opened with cold and dry conditions. On December 11th, south Louisiana had the perfect set-up for a snow event, whereby the entire southern half of the state was covered in snow – up to 8 inches at Amite. The latter half of the month was mostly warm and dry.